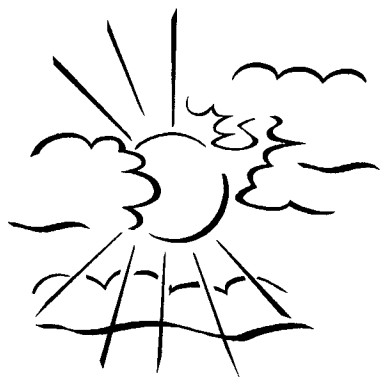


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Prepared by the
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*Important story at this spot

Articles in Today's Clips

Thursday, October 20, 2005

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

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Keeping it WARM

By Tom Willard

Daily Tribune Staff Writer

PUBLISHED: October 18, 2005

MADISON HEIGHTS — With temperatures falling and home heating costs expected to soar this winter, Naomi Webb is growing more and more worried.

The Southfield retiree's natural gas service was shut off last month after she was unable to absorb the full brunt of a Consumers Energy bill that ballooned to nearly \$700 during an extensive hospital stay.

Webb, 75, said she had arranged direct payment on all of her bills while hospitalized, but that gas somehow went delinquent. She paid \$300 but couldn't come up with the balance in time to avoid shut-off.

"I'm afraid of me being in this house without heat," said the former social worker, who lives alone in her three-bedroom ranch. "I don't want to go back to the hospital. I've used up more orange juice and preventive medicine, trying not to get sick."

On Monday, Democratic state legislators announced an emergency energy plan aimed at helping Michigan residents like Webb cope with a nearly 50 percent projected increase in natural gas bills this coming winter.

The legislative package calls for banning utilities from shutting off heat to the homes of low-income and other residents, providing payment assistance through emergency funds and offering incentives to families that make their homes more energy-efficient.

"We want to do whatever we can to help our residents heat their homes this winter because of skyrocketing energy costs," said Rep. Marie Donigan, D-Royal Oak, at a news conference in Madison Heights, one of several stops House and Senate Democrats made across the state to unveil the Winter Assistance and Relief for Michigan plan.

The legislation would prohibit natural gas utilities from shutting off service for non-payment of bills during the heating season of Dec. 1, 2005 to March 31, 2006, for those with incomes under 200 percent of federal poverty level — currently \$38,700 for a family of four.

Senior citizens, veterans, military families, Social Security recipients and individuals who receive cash/food assistance or federal Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program funds would also be protected.

Home heating will pose a financial burden to more low- and middle-income residents this year, according to Donigan, who was joined at the Madison Heights news conference by Sen. Gilda Jacobs, D-Huntington Woods, and Rep. Aldo Vagnozzi, D-Farmington/Farmington Hills.

This week, the Michigan Public Service Commission announced that natural gas bills will jump 46 percent this winter — or an average of \$59 a month — partly because U.S. supply lines were damaged by the hurricanes that ravaged the South. In Michigan, eight of 10 homes are heated with natural gas, Donigan said.

The Democratic legislation would also allow low-income residents who install energy-efficient furnaces, reseal windows or make other weatherization improvements to their homes to deduct 50 percent of their expenses, up to \$5,000 per year.

In addition, the WARM proposal would:

- Expand the Home Heating Credit by allowing people who earn 125 percent of the federal poverty level (\$24,000 for a family of four) to qualify. The current income threshold is 110 percent of poverty level. The measure would also increase the average assistance to eligible families from \$210 to \$250 annually.

n Give the MPSC authority to declare an energy emergency and use approximately \$5 million in funds that would otherwise be used for energy efficiency for all customer classes for low-income residents only.

n Create a "Keep Our Families Warm" account, which would be funded through voluntary income tax donations.

n Create a program headed by the Department of Human Services in which individuals and companies would be allowed to donate time, services and materials used to help low-income families complete energy efficiency projects.

n Urge Congress to approve an increase in LIHEAP block grants to states, from \$1.8 billion appropriated this year to \$3.4 billion.

Democrats are also calling for an emergency summit of parties interested in developing a long-term energy plan, which Jacobs said is long overdue.

"There is an energy crisis in the United States," she said. "We have to look at all of the energy issues, whether it's natural gas or the gas in our cars."

In the meantime, helping low-income and other families handle the rising cost of heating their homes is an important stopgap measure, she said.

Contact Tom Willard at tom.willard@dailytribune.com or 248-591-2564.

BWL program offers heating help

LSJ
10/28
1B The Lansing Board of Water and Light has announced a new program to help its low- and moderate-income customers get through the upcoming heating season.

Called EnergyWise Weatherization, the program will offer free energy audits and energy efficiency improvements to an estimated 225 residential customers.

Participants must be BWL customers who are current in their BWL utility bill payments, live in single-family dwellings and meet federal income guidelines.

Preference will be given to customers who own their homes.

The BWL has committed \$45,000 to the new program, or enough to conduct energy audits and install efficiency improvements in 225 homes. To inquire about program eligibility, customers can contact Urban Options at 337-0422.

— *From staff reports*

NEWS: Local/Regional

McDowell co-sponsors plan to help families cope with high heating bills

BY FRED GRAY NEWS-REVIEW STAFF WRITER

Tuesday, October 18, 2005 2:02 PM EDT

Democrats in the state Legislature on Monday announced an emergency energy plan to help families cope with heating costs that are expected to skyrocket this winter.

Key components of the package include banning utilities from shutting off heat to homes during winter months, providing payment assistance through emergency funds and offering incentives to help families make their homes more energy efficient.

“Michigan families deserve relief from the harsh cold of winter and financial hardships, and that's what this legislation does,” said State Rep. Gary McDowell, D-Rudyard, who is sponsoring one of the five bills expected to be introduced in the House in the next few weeks.

“With home heating costs expected to rise dramatically, many families will be struggling to ensure their homes are safe and warm for their children or their parents. Michigan is facing an emergency situation when winter hits.

“This legislation ensures that we are prepared to help our families cope with big heating bills.”

McDowell told the News-Review that he expects the package will receive a favorable bipartisan hearing in the House.

Hannahville community fights back against domestic violence

October 20, 2005

Jenny Lancour
jlancour@dailypress.net

HANNAHVILLE - We' We' Netth e ge'. That's Potawatomi for "to do right." That's just what the Hannahville community was doing for its residents by promoting awareness of domestic violence with a parade Wednesday.

For the past 15 years, the community has organized the parade during October, which is Domestic Awareness Month, said Ruth Oja, victim advocate.

"The idea is to stop domestic violence or have the community have an ownership in not tolerating domestic violence in their homes," Oja said. "When the community takes ownership, that's when it's going to stop."

A goal of the parade is to promote zero tolerance for domestic violence by getting both youth and adults involved to make the community safer, Oja said.

Participants in the parade included the Youth Advisory Council, Youth Center, Substance Abuse Program, the tribe's Vision Center, Hannahville Social Services, Hannahville Behavioral Health, and other community groups.

Parade organizer Nora Van-Enkevort said it's important to involve everyone and encourages other communities to participate in domestic violence awareness activities.

"I'm really proud of our community and how everybody pulls together to take this stand. I think that's important," she said.

Victims to receive justice

On Sept. 16, The COOR Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence hosted a round table discussion on handling domestic violence cases in the court system. Judge Thomas Phillips, Erin House, special assistant attorney general, Noelle Moeggenberg, assistant prosecutor, Robert Brown, Probation Department and Jo Bullis, Program Director, Women's Resource Center, all from Traverse City, and Judge Hunter, Crawford County Family Court Judge, sat on the afternoon panel. Other important figures in attendance were Judge Sutton, Judge Noel, Judge Dosson, Mark Jernigan, Roscommon County prosecutor, and LaDonna Schultz and Mark Williams, Ogemaw County prosecutors. Joel Sheltroun, 103rd District House Representative, also attended some of the discussion and toured River House shelter on September 30.

The Round Table Discussion centered around the pros and cons of developing a fast track system for domestic violence cases whereby one prosecutor handles all domestic violence cases.

Crawford County has been assigned a special prosecutor and will be working with River House and the Domestic Violence Prevention and Treatment Board to implement the program. "This is an exciting time for Crawford County," says Rhoda Hacker,

Director for River House. "Because domestic violence is such a complicated issue, going through the court process often requires extra attention to consistently ensure that victims receive justice and batterers are held accountable."

The COOR Coalition will also be working with Roscommon, Ogemaw and Oscoda Counties to bring a special prosecutor to their court systems.

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. For additional information, please contact River House, Inc. at 989-348-3169 or visit their website at www.riverhousesheleter.org.

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Onetime celebrated immigrant suspected in slaying, knife attack

Thursday, October 20, 2005

By Nate Reens
The Grand Rapids Press

GRAND RAPIDS -- A California lawyer said he didn't believe the orphaned boy he helped gain asylum in the United States in 2000 is capable of murder, having been beaten by relatives for much of his childhood.

Edwin Lario Munoz, 19, wanted to be an FBI agent and protect people from abuse, even testifying before members of a U.S. Senate subcommittee when he was an eighth-grader at Thornapple Kellogg Middle School.

The teen's testimony on the plight of orphaned immigrant children thrust him into a national spotlight, with a photo of Munoz appearing on the cover of Parade Magazine, inserted into newspapers across the country. Articles also appeared in the San Diego Union-Tribune, the Boston Globe and Los Angeles Times.

But Munoz, a Honduras native who was jailed for months upon illegally crossing the U.S. border from Mexico when he was 13, again is incarcerated, possibly for life.

Grand Rapids police say the Southeast Side man, accused of the attempted murder of Leoncio Garcia-Lopez, attacked his downstairs neighbor at 848 Baxter St. SE with a knife Friday.

Investigators also say he is suspected in the murder of Garcia-Lopez's 27-year-old pregnant wife, Sylvia Sanchez, whom he allegedly strangled inside the rental home.

Grand Rapids police detectives said they learned about his childhood in a background investigation but haven't discussed the details with him.

"He must have taken a really bad turn," said California lawyer Manuel "Manny" Sanchez, who helped Munoz gain asylum. "I saw no malice in this kid. He was affable, likable.

"But, by the time he was a teenager, he was hardened by what he'd been through, more than you or I have been in our entire lives."

In February 2002, Munoz, then 16, appeared before a congressional subcommittee holding hearings on legislation to reform the treatment of unaccompanied alien minors in federal immigration custody.

Munoz drew support from senators who heard him describe hitchhiking from Honduras, crossing the border and being caught by immigration officials. He left Central America for the U.S.

seeking a better life after relatives abused him with a noose, car tools and other objects, he said.

"For six years, from when I was 7 to when I was 13, my cousin forced me to work on the streets and give him money. When I didn't earn enough money, he punished me ... leaving scars on my body, on my knees, legs and arms," Munoz testified.

He also detailed abuse and mistreatment inside a California youth home that he recalled as "the worst place I have ever been in life."

Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., tried to comfort Munoz, saying "your worst days are behind you." Kennedy told Munoz he hoped the country would live up to his dreams.

Sanchez, the California lawyer, hasn't stayed in touch with Munoz since they won his asylum, which put him on track for becoming a naturalized U.S. citizen.

Munoz told police he was trying to stop Garcia-Lopez, 43, from hurting his pregnant wife.

Sanchez said that picture fits the boy he remembers.

"What he lacked in height and weight, he made up in courage," the lawyer said. "I think he's capable of defending himself or someone else, but murder...., that's odd."

Published October 20, 2005

Teeny Titans Nursery allows teen mothers to attend classes

Child care option at Hill Center helps students

By Susan Vela
Lansing State Journal

A teen mom, Danielle Nicholson began missing school because she couldn't find safe, affordable child care for her daughter, Audrey.

Her hopes of becoming a registered nurse were slipping away when Lansing educators called last summer to tell her about the district's new Teeny Titans Nursery.

Danielle, 17, joined Lansing school administrators, teachers, community members and other teen moms Wednesday in celebrating the nursery's opening this fall at Lansing's Hill Center for Academics and Technology.

Danielle and the other moms can do class work in the same building while a child-care provider looks after their children. And like other nurseries, its rooms are painted in soothing pastel colors and fashioned with toys and practical furnishings.

"Now, I can come to school and go all day," said Danielle, whose daughter has been affectionately dubbed "Hurricane Audrey" at the nursery. "She's with me so I don't have to worry so much."

Before Teeny Titans, Haslett's Meridian High School was the only Ingham County public school providing child care for teen moms pursuing a diploma, Meridian Principal Greg Shook said.

According to the Michigan Department of Community Health, teen pregnancies have been going down, numbering 6,663 high school-aged girls statewide in 2003, the most recent year for which statistics are available.

But both health officials and educators say there's a need for such endeavors as Teeny Titans. Without them, young moms are more likely to become dropouts.

"We have to look at the total young lady," Superintendent E. Sharon Banks said. The nursery "is just another way to help."

An \$8,450 grant from Ronald McDonald House Charities of Outstate Michigan made the nursery possible. It's open for two sessions during the day - from 7:45 a.m. to 10:45 a.m. and 11:45 a.m. to 2:45 p.m. A child-care provider watches four children, the nursery's maximum.

Contact Susan Vela at 702-4248 or svela@lsj.com.

Cause of death uncertain

Thursday, October 20, 2005

The Grand Rapids Press

HUDSONVILLE -- Ottawa County health officials said they did not yet know what caused a 3-year-old Jamestown Township girl's death Tuesday. The child, Aleighana Judge, began suffering flu-like symptoms Sunday. Her mother planned to take her to a doctor Tuesday but called an ambulance early that morning when the girl became lethargic. Ottawa County Medical Director Dr. Paul Heidel said medical examiners might need several days to get results from fluid cultures and blood tests to determine whether the cause was a flu strain or some other infection. "Sometimes, you have to wait until all the tests are back to rule things out," he said.

October 20, 2005

Alleged confessions admissible in trial

Attorney sought to reduce bond

By IAN C. STOREY

Record-Eagle staff writer

TRAVERSE CITY - A local man's alleged confessions will be admissible when he stands trial for allegedly throwing an infant to the ground because the child "spit up" milk.

Phillip Jon Fahrner, 28, is accused of first-degree child abuse for allegedly flinging Cameron Strang to the floor of a house in July, when Cameron was 11 months old.

Grand Traverse County sheriff's officials said Fahrner was watching Cameron while the boy's mother, Amy Strang, worked in Traverse City.

Cameron is not expected to survive his injuries, medical officials said.

Fahrner recently appeared before 13th Circuit Court Judge Thomas Power for a final conference on the abuse charge.

Defense attorney Jeffrey Slocombe filed a motion to suppress Fahrner's alleged confession to sheriff's officials at the DeVos Children's Hospital in Grand Rapids.

Slocombe also petitioned the court to reduce Fahrner's bond from \$1 million to \$50,000.

But Power said the extent of the evidence against Fahrner and belief by doctors that Cameron eventually will die from his injuries - which assistant prosecutor Robert Cooney said would prompt a new or amended charge - was enough to deny the motion.

Cameron was taken to Grand Rapids on July 23 and released three weeks later.

Fahrner faces up to 15 years in prison on the child abuse charge and is expected to begin trial in November.

Sheriff's detectives told Power that doctors recently said Cameron likely will succumb to his injuries - including brain damage and paralysis - although he has survived for almost three months.

Breast massages may lead to charges

Chiropractor accused of touching teens

FENTON

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Wednesday, October 19, 2005

By Shantell M. Kirkendoll

skirkendoll@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6366

FENTON - A Fenton chiropractor who allegedly touched two teenage girls' breasts, saying they were uneven and needed adjustments, could face criminal charges.

The Genesee County prosecutor's office is considering whether to file charges against Robert J. Moore for his adjustments, which sometimes were done during lunch hour at his home.

Both girls worked for Moore and also were treated by him.

"The matter remains under investigation," Genesee County Prosecutor David Leyton said Tuesday. "It's up to our office to decide if there'll be charges and whether we want additional information."

A staff member in Moore's office told The Flint Journal last week that Moore would not comment on the case. Moore did not return a call to his home Tuesday.

Moore has temporarily lost his state chiropractic license. He told state Department of Community Health investigators he was treating the girls for uneven breasts and curvature of the spine.

But department investigators believe he fabricated the diagnoses and the adjustments needed to fix them.

"Breasts are not an area that normally falls under the scope of chiropractic care," said Carl Alden, director of insurance and government relations with the Michigan Chiropractic Society, a Lansing-based group that promotes chiropractic care.

Michigan limits chiropractic care to treating spinal problems, back pain, neck pain and other joint dysfunction, but that "never involves manipulating breast tissue," Alden said.

Moore, 40, is not a member of the society, Alden said.

Moore has until Oct. 26 to respond to the state charges or he risks permanently losing his chiropractic license.

Fenton police Detective Ron Skarzynski said police investigated the girls' claims, notified the state and have turned the case over to the prosecutor.

One girl, 17, worked in Moore's office as a file clerk for five months in the spring of 2004 and took care of his child at his home. As a condition of employment, she was to become Moore's patient and submit to spinal adjustments, according to state disciplinary records obtained by The Flint Journal.

While performing an adjustment to the girl's head, Moore indicated her breasts were uneven and said he needed to adjust them, she told state investigators.

He pressed and massaged her breasts for 10 minutes. After he was done, Moore said to let him know if her chest hurt again, and he would treat her, the report said.

"(The girl) was surprised by the comment, because she had not complained of having any pain in her chest area," the report said.

Moore performed the breast adjustments twice in June 2004 at his home and again on July 10 when he asked her to remove all her clothes.

She did not report to work July 12. Instead her father called and asked that her last paycheck be mailed to their home, according to the state report.

A 16-year-old girl who worked at the office as a file clerk and receptionist from June 2003 to June 2004 also had the breast adjustments, according to state records.

The records also detail another accusation that Moore allegedly told the girl to touch another adult female patients' breasts in an exam room.

The same girl said that in the spring of 2004, she was asked to roll her pants down while Moore treated her for stomach pain. He said the pain was caused by something pushing against her appendix and massaged her abdomen, the report states.

Moore billed the 16-year-old girl's insurance for the adjustments.

The girls' names are not used in state records to protect their identity.

Since Moore's license was suspended Sept. 26, he has not been in his office at TLC Chiropractic on N. Leroy Street.

The state has accused Moore of negligence, incompetence, lack of good moral character and practicing outside the scope of chiropractic care.

"It's unclear at this juncture whether he has an attorney," said Ray Garza, an official with the Bureau of Health Professions. "The clock is ticking."

Health professionals must respond within 30 days to request an administrative hearing or the matter is automatically turned over to a disciplinary action committee.

October 20, 2005

Kirk faces federal charges

By PATRICK SULLIVAN
Record-Eagle staff writer

CHARLEVOIX - A man accused of changing his name to hide sex crime convictions who worked at Charlevoix-Emmet Intermediate School District now faces federal charges.

An indictment filed last week alleges that "Arthur Kirk, a/k/a Arthur Kirkeby," made false statements on an application to a federally funded school program when he stated he had no criminal record.

The three-count indictment, signed by Assistant United States Attorney Thomas J. Gezon, said Kirk failed to disclose convictions in Macomb County for second-degree criminal sexual conduct in 1978 and for first-degree criminal sexual conduct in 1981.

Kirk served more than five years in prison after the 1981 conviction, which involved an 8-year-old boy, and he legally changed his name from Kirkeby in Ingham County in 1985, officials said. Kirk, 71, of Charlevoix Township, was arrested in July on felony weapons charges after his criminal record was revealed when he applied for a concealed weapons permit and was required to undergo a fingerprint-based background check.

Kirk had volunteered at the school district through AmeriCorps since 2001.

Grant to expand services to youths

Thursday, October 20, 2005

se@kalamazoogazette.com 388-8554

Kalamazoo County is set to offer services to hundreds more emotionally disturbed children and their families through a \$6.37 million grant the agency was awarded this month.

Kalamazoo Community Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services and the Kalamazoo Multipurpose Collaborative Body received the six-year, renewable grant from the U.S.

Department of Health and Human Services on Oct. 3. Kalamazoo County is one of two Michigan communities to win the funds and one of 25 winners nationwide.

The grant enables the community to broaden the scope of Wraparound, a program that has existed in the area since the mid-1990s, to provide a multitude of services to families ``across systems," including mental health, juvenile justice and schools. Participants provide not only mental-health services, but mentoring, respite care and employment help to children and their families.

The funding also will allow for more individualized treatment plans for children and their families and more specialty assessments, according to Michelle Houtrow, the director of Kalamazoo Wraps, formerly known as the Wraparound program.

The grant recipients applauded past collaborative efforts embodied in Kalamazoo Multi-Purpose Collaborative Body -- an effort involving families, public schools, the Department of Human Services, courts and mental health representatives -- with helping them gain the attention of the grantors.

``This grant really would not have been possible had we not been working with those systems" already," said Patricia Weighman, deputy director with community mental health. The federal grant was partially matched with funds from the community mental health's \$5 million budget for children's service.

With the increased funding, Kalamazoo Wraps expects to serve at least 600 more children by the grant's end in 2011, Weighman said. The program currently serves 100 families with children 18 years old and younger. Weighman will oversee the grant, which will allow for services for young adults through age 21.

Weighman said, based on statistical prevalence rates, that about one-fifth of the county's 57,000 children -- some 11,500 -- are in need of mental-health services. She said that national estimates are that 5 percent to 9 percent of children have such serious emotional impairments that they wind up being suspended from school, becoming involved in juvenile court or requiring services from a number of agencies.

``Wraparound is a great process, and everyone loves it, but we're only able to serve about 100 kids a year, and so it became apparent that this has to be the way that the systems come together -- with families as full partners -- as a way of doing business," Weighman said.

Weighman and Houtrow said the project represents an approach and a chance to work with needy children and families in a system that often lacked enough resources and seemed uncoordinated.

``Wraparound is a philosophy," Houtrow said. ``It's a way of bringing people together at the same table at the same time to unite hope and build on strengths."

In the past, they said, those providing services often were frustrated by how isolated they felt in dealing with children with emotional disturbances and their families and finding adequate help for them.

“When we came together to talk about kids and mental-health needs, what we found is that the programs are not as effective as people wanted them to be,” Weighman said. “There wasn’t enough involvement across systems. A kid could be having trouble in school and at home and be getting two totally different sets of advice and no assessment or no clear assessment.”

Kalamazoo Community Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services is headed by Executive Director Jeff Patton, who said it would be the agency’s responsibility to find a way to sustain the services after the grant runs out in six years.

“This is very, very special,” Patton said of the grant. “It opens the door for us to get more federal funding.”

Federal grant money will help teach abstinence in five northern counties

Wednesday, October 19, 2005

By Eric English
BAY CITY TIMES WRITER

TAWAS CITY - With teen pregnancies in Northeast Michigan running about 4 percentage points higher than the state average, more federal dollars are on the way to teach abstinence education in area high schools.

Tawas City-based St. Joseph Health System is receiving a \$642,285 grant to fund a 10-week course that encourages teens to refrain from sexual activity. About 4,000 teenagers are expected to participate in the program in Alcona, Arenac, Iosco, Ogemaw, and Oscoda counties.

"Students need continuous encouragement in their decisions to remain abstinent from sexual activity, especially because peer pressure is so strong," said Michelle Kalafut, director of St. Joseph's Taking Charge Teen Abstinence Program.

The federal grant to fund the project is one of two grants awarded to Northeast Lower Peninsula hospitals this week, according to U.S. Rep. Bart Stupak, D-Menominee. The second grant is a \$482,000 award to Grayling Mercy Hospital to help pay for a \$6.3 million emergency room expansion.

Kalafut said the St. Joseph abstinence program has been under way for the past seven years. The project expects to receive an additional two years of federal funding beyond this year, she said.

The program is working to drive down the rate of teen pregnancies in the five-county region, which amounted to 13.7 percent of all births in 2003, compared to a state average of 9.5 percent. The same year, the number of births to unmarried women was 40.3 percent, compared to a state average of 34.6 percent, Kalafut said.

The abstinence program appears to be having some success. The pregnancy rate among 15-to 19-year-old girls fell from about 90 per 1,000 in 1992 to 55 per 1,000 in 2003. That was slightly more than the drop in teen pregnancies statewide during the same 11-year period.

Kalafut said parents can choose to have their children participate or not participate in the abstinence program when it is offered at their high school. Fifteen area schools will take part in the program, she said.

The program teaches factual information about the consequences associated with teen sexual activity, including sexually transmitted infections, depression and pregnancy.

In Crawford County, Mercy Hospital will use a \$482,000 federal grant for development and construction of its new emergency department.

The Times was unable to reach a spokesman at Grayling Mercy on Tuesday. But according to the hospital's Web site, the emergency room was built in 1978 and serves about 20,000 people a year - twice what it was designed to handle.

Construction is expected to begin this fall with completion in mid-2007. The project will double the space available for emergency care, increasing the department from eight to 14 treatment beds, according to the Web site.

Thumb woman fights deportation

Wednesday, October 19, 2005

By Tom Gilchrist
TIMES WRITER

MINDEN CITY - Throughout their young lives, 13-year-old Geta Berishaj and her two younger brothers have called America home.

Twelve-year-old Lazer Berishaj and 5-year-old Clinton Berishaj, like Geta, were born here. Clinton's mother, 45-year-old Marije Berishaj, named him after former U.S. President Bill Clinton.

The kids go to school in Deckerville and live with their mom in a two-story home along a remote Sanilac County gravel road nine miles from the hamlet of Minden City.

Come Friday, however, U.S. Department of Homeland Security officials plan to deport Marije Berishaj to her native country of Serbia & Montenegro - the former Yugoslavia.

A teary-eyed Marije - pronounced "Maria" - said she won't go without her kids.

"I don't want to be separated from my kids and have someone adopt my kids," Marije Berishaj said. "No. I love my kids. For my husband, I leave. For my family, I leave. But no one else take my kids."

Marije Berishaj has violated federal immigration laws, according to Greg Palmore of the Detroit office of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE.

"I wouldn't characterize her as a national security threat, but she has violated immigration law and that's a crime within itself," Palmore said. "She has violated and she has already been found removable by an immigration law judge."

"Our job is to carry out the judge's final order, and by doing that, we're restoring the integrity to the immigration laws."

Marije Berishaj (pronounced "bear-EEE-shy") said she possesses no passport or visa. She is unemployed and doesn't have a green card, which would permit her to work legally in the United States

She said she has lived in America since 1991, when she and her husband, Martin, arrived from Yugoslavia. Marije Berishaj said her passport expired in 1995.

Martin Berishaj, 56, has lived in the Kosovo region of Serbia & Montenegro since the U.S. government deported him in 2002, Marije Berishaj said.

Federal ICE officials sent Marije Berishaj an Oct. 4 letter ordering her and her three children to report to the ICE location in Detroit on Friday afternoon for removal from the United States.

Marije Berishaj's neighbor, 81-year-old Vernon A. Wesch, doesn't like the government plan to ship the Berishaj family back to the town of Dakovica, in the Kosovo region of Serbia & Montenegro.

"I could see it if (Marije) was a threat to our country, but this just seems crazy," said Wesch, who has joined with his wife, 71-year-old Elisabeth Kunze, to try to help the Berishaj family stay.

NATO air strikes took place in Kosovo in 1999 to combat the federal army's "cleansing" of ethnic Albanians, hundreds of thousands of whom fled the country.

"They've let Marije stay here since 1991, so why couldn't they leave her here long enough to get her kids raised?" Wesch said. "Her husband said there's still sporadic shooting going on over there in Kosovo.

"They're sending this family back to a dangerous situation."

More than that, Wesch said he fears the three Berishaj children won't receive proper medical, educational or financial assistance in Kosovo. Lazer Berishaj, for example, has autism and benefits from contact with specially trained teachers who help him here.

His mother receives a total of about \$1,400 per month in federal benefits and food stamps, Wesch said.

"A few months ago, I talked to a friend (of Marije Berishaj) who said there are no doctors and no hospitals over in Kosovo, and the kids only go to school until about the fifth grade," Wesch said.

Marije Berishaj's two sons don't know of the government plan to deport them, but Geta Berishaj, an eighth-grader in the Deckerville Community School District, learned of the plan Monday night, Elisabeth Kunze said.

"The mailman told her about it, and she didn't want to come home," Kunze said. "She went to a neighbor's house, and the neighbor called the police, who took Geta home."

The three Berishaj children are U.S. citizens because they were born here, but Palmore of the federal ICE office said, "It's up to the parents whether or not they want to take them with them, and we'll do everything to facilitate that, due to the fact (that) our goal is to keep the family together."

A government mental-health professional wrote that authorities seized the three children from Marije Berishaj for about five days earlier this year after Marije Berishaj allegedly threatened to harm herself and the children.

Marije Berishaj said the incident was a misunderstanding when she made a joke to a bank employee about taking her kids and "jumping in the lake" when chatting about how little money Berishaj had in the bank. The teller called police.

Since that incident, though, Marije's "support system has grown," according to the mental-health worker's report.

Social workers have urged 13-year-old Geta Berishaj to remain in the United States, Vernon Wesch said. Nancy Albert of the Sanilac County Department of Human Services declined comment about Wesch's statement.

The family's case may not be helped by an argument Martin Berishaj reportedly had with a federal employee in 2002 when he unsuccessfully tried to convince the worker to increase the amount of his federal disability benefits.

Marije Berishaj said her husband suffered a head injury decades ago, but said she doesn't know the cause of it. Kunze said the worker for the U.S. Social Security Administration claimed an angry Martin

Berishaj told her she should have been inside the World Trade Center when terrorists destroyed it on Sept. 11, 2001.

"She claimed Martin was going to blow her (federal) building up, too, but he said he didn't make such statements and that she was just mad at him.

"No matter what happened, you can't take it out on Marije. She's not responsible for his behavior," Kunze said.

Marije Berishaj refuses to consider the thought of leaving for good Friday, instead focusing only on a happy ending.

"If somebody can help me, I stay here," she said.

Berishaj also prefers to focus on a bright future - in America - for her three children.

"I like here," she said. "I don't say bad for this country. I put President Clinton name on my son (Clinton). I said, 'Maybe he can go be president.'"

When asked what will happen to Berishaj and her three children if they don't show up in Detroit's ICE office on Friday as ordered, ICE spokesman Palmore said, "I don't know. ... We'll take this one step at a time."

- Tom Gilchrist covers regional news for The Times. He can be reached at (989) 894-9649 or at 1-800-875-4444, ext. 649, or by e-mail at: tgilchrist@bc-times.com.

he injury, which occurred long before their 1985 marriage.

ASSOCIATED PRESS WIRE

Mom Arrested in Bay Area Children's Deaths

By JORDAN ROBERTSON

Thursday, October 20, 2005 12:51 PM EDT

SAN FRANCISCO - A woman who tossed her three young children off a pier into San Francisco Bay near Fishermen's Wharf has been arrested, authorities said Thursday, and the Coast Guard searched for the bodies of two of the children.

The body of a third child was recovered Wednesday.

Lashaun Harris, 23, of Oakland, was booked on three counts of murder and three counts of assault on a child with great bodily injury, according to Susan Fahey, spokeswoman for the San Francisco Sheriff's Department. Harris remained in custody early Thursday with no court date set, she said. Harris' children were identified as Trayshaun Harris, 6, Travante Greely, 2, and Joshua Harris, 1.

A child's body was found about four hours after a witness reported seeing a woman drop the children into the bay near Pier 7, said Jonathan Guerra of the Coast Guard. The body was not immediately identified.

While rescuers searched for the children Wednesday night, an empty stroller was visible on the pier. A small inflatable Coast Guard boat hugged the water front as rescuers used hand-held flashlights to search under the pier. Larger Coast Guard and San Francisco police boats searched the water with high-powered flashlights.

Mayor Gavin Newsom came to the scene to get briefed by authorities, telling reporters, "I'm sick to my stomach," before leaving.

Lashaun Harris told authorities that voices had told her to throw her children into the water, the San Francisco Chronicle reported. It was not immediately known whether she had an attorney.

Asia Powell, who identified herself as Harris' cousin, said Harris was taking medication for a mental illness.

"I know that she would never hurt her kids," she told KPIX-TV. "I know that."

Harris had been staying with her children at a Salvation Army shelter in Oakland, the Chronicle reported.

"I just talked to her yesterday," Mary Ann Ramirez, the shelter's social services manager, told the newspaper Wednesday. "We had our usual, 'How are you doing, how's the kids.' I would never have guessed in a million years that today she would do that."

The pier is in the Embarcadero area, which draws tourists to the historic Ferry Building within view of Coit Tower and the landmark Transamerica pyramid. It's about a mile from Fishermen's Wharf.

A service of the Associated Press(AP)

Juvenile Lifers

Make parole possible for some young offenders

Detroit Free Press

October 20, 2005

Young Michiganders can receive mandatory life sentences before they're old enough to buy cigarettes, vote or drive. State legislators ought to change this unjust and unforgiving system, which ignores the longstanding role of maturity and competence in assessing legal culpability.

More than 300 people in Michigan serving mandatory life sentences, without possibility of parole, were convicted of crimes they committed when they were 14 to 17 -- the nation's third highest number of juvenile cases. Nearly two-thirds of them are African American.

Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and the American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan joined together in Detroit last week to spotlight Michigan's role in this nationwide problem and start pushing for legal and legislative changes.

Because of their immaturity, juveniles do not have the same rights as adults. Logically, neither should they generally suffer the same consequences.

As a first step, the Legislature ought to abolish life without parole for any offense committed by anyone 17 or younger, as well as permit parole for offenders convicted as juveniles and now serving life-without-parole sentences. That change, in itself, would not release anyone from prison. It would simply allow the Parole Board to look at a case and decide whether the offender is a good candidate for parole. In many cases, the juveniles were not directly involved with the murder they were convicted of. Nor did most have adequate legal representation.

To be sure, punishment is appropriate for young people who commit crimes. But the maximum adult penalty of life without parole, which forever locks out a second chance, is unreasonable and unwarranted for anyone too young to exercise adult rights and responsibilities.

Dancing event to raise money for health department

By SARA ROBINSON
Alpena News Staff Writer

Alpena residents will be given the chance to learn a few new dance steps Saturday, and in the process they will be helping **uninsured women** receive free cancer screenings.

Dancing with the Stars of Alpena, a District Health Department No. 4 fund-raiser, is patterned after the weekly television show, Dancing with the Stars.

According to health department Personal Health Supervisor Pat Rondeau, dance time for participants will be sandwiched between hourly demonstrations by dancers Jan Robarge and Betty Thom. The two dancers will be demonstrating a number of dances, including the East and West Coast Swing, a latin dance and the hustle.

At the beginning of the evening, the 'stars' will be center stage with an introductory dance number. And while the stars of the television show are celebrities, the stars of the fund-raiser are three individuals who have been instrumental in providing cancer support and education to the community.

Donna Kowalski, a cancer survivor who provides one-on-one counseling to those who have been diagnosed with cancer; Clint Bohlen, the Alpena Regional Medical Center grant coordinator who wrote the grant for the hospital's mobile mammography unit; and Jan Kane, director of community health for ARMC, have been chosen for the honor.

The fund-raiser will also feature a cash bar and a silent auction.

Rondeau said the evening will be a good time for all.

"If you want to have good, clean fun, if you like to dance, that's the place to be," she said.

But more importantly, the money raised during the event will provide additional free cancer screenings for women who are between the ages of 40 and 64, and who are **at or below 250 percent of the poverty level**.

Rondeau said the fund-raiser was organized this year as to make up for funds lost due to program cuts at the state level.

This year the District Health Department No. 4 program has seen a \$1,500 cut in coordination funds. Rondeau said health department staff is hoping to raise approximately \$2,000 so as many women can be screened this year as in past years.

"We're trying to raise a little money to subsidize what we've lost from the state," Rondeau said.

"We feel very strongly about doing as much as we can and as many people as we can," she said.

If the health department meets its target, 450 women will be screened this year, instead of the 411 that would be screened without the additional funds.

Screening greatly improves the chances for survival, because cancer is more likely to be caught in an earlier stage, Rondeau said.

"Screenings are very important," she said. "Our survival rate is increasing because of early detection. And that's what this is all about."

Dancing with the Stars will take place at VFW Post 2496 on Connon Street from 7-11 p.m.

Saturday. Tickets are \$25 for each couple and \$15 for an individual. They can be purchased at the door or in advance at Neiman's Family Market.

Sara Robinson can be reached via e-mail at srobinson@thealpenanews.com or by phone at 354-3111 ext. 316.

HOUSE APPROVES NURSING HOME PACKAGE

Nursing homes would have to drug test employees, would have to post inspection results and would be able to use “dining assistants” to feed residents under bills approved Wednesday by the House.

The dining assistants garnered the most controversy, with HB 4789 passing 59-47. Supporters said the bill would free up nursing staff to assist residents, but opponents argued the bill would mean more minimum wage jobs in nursing homes.

“Nursing homes already face among the highest turnover,” said Rep. Aldo Vagnozzi (D-Farmington Hills). “This bill would add another position to that category.”

But Rep. Rick Shaffer (R-Three Rivers) said the bill would keep staff in jobs where their training was needed. “In the dining room when there are many patients to be fed, there are nurses and nurses aides in the dining room when there are patients in their rooms needing those types of services,” he said.

The only other opposition was to HB 5183, which requires nursing homes to have a substance abuse testing policy that includes random testing of employees, where Rep. Leon Drolet (R-Clinton Township) made the vote 105-1.

HB 4792, which requires that nursing homes post the results of their most recent inspection by the Department of Community Health and any approved correction plan resulting from that inspection, passed 106-0.

October 20, 2005

Police seek missing Manistee woman

FROM RECORD EAGLE STAFF REPORTS

MANISTEE - Police are looking for a 77-year-old woman who may have walked away from an adult foster care home.

Manistee County Sheriff's deputies said Wilma Elizabeth Frederickson was last seen at the Harmony House Adult Foster Care Facility Monday morning wearing a tan or beige corduroy jacket, tan pants and white tennis shoes.

Food Bank sponsors program for children

HOMETOWN HEADLINES

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Thursday, October 20, 2005

By Kristin Longle

klongley@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6249

The Food Bank of Eastern Michigan is sponsoring the Child and Adult Food Care Program.

The program feeds children in child care centers, after-school programs, and family care day care homes.

Meals are available to all children in the food bank's child care program who are 12 or younger, migrant children 15 or younger, disabled and children enrolled in an after-school, at-risk program who are 18 or younger.

If a family's income falls within certain guidelines, they are eligible for free or reduced-price meals.

Details: Royaa Soltani at (810) 239-4441.

Washtenaw County chipping away at homelessness, board told

Thursday, October 20, 2005

BY ART AISNER

Ann Arbor News Staff Reporter

Homelessness and homeland security were among the issues discussed Wednesday as the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners reviewed its proposed budget for next year. County department heads and elected officials spent the majority of the board's Ways and Means Committee meeting explaining the multiple initiatives under way.

The presentations were part of the board's ongoing review of the proposed \$97.55 million budget for 2006, which County Administrator Bob Guenzel said should be finalized in early November. The proposed spending plan is about \$857,405 less than the current budget.

Amy Klinke, director of the Office of Community Development, said several programs are under way in the county to increase the wealth of low-income households through home ownership. She said data-driven plans to address housing and development needs in specific communities have been created in line with the county's blueprint for ending homelessness.

One success highlighted Wednesday was last week's official opening of the Carrot Way housing development off of Dhu Varren Road on Ann Arbor's north side. The 30 apartment units were built over the past two years through a collaboration between Food Gatherers and Avalon Housing Inc., and with funding from local, state and federal agencies.

About a dozen units are occupied and Avalon continues to review some 600 applications.

"We're doing some really good work and chipping away at a really big problem," Klinke said.

Marc Breckenridge, director of emergency management and homeland security, said the county is continuously improving the public health system to respond to chemical, biological, nuclear and natural emergencies, and coordinating planning for disaster response between the numerous federal, state, regional and local agencies. The county has completed \$1.7 million in homeland security grant projects since 2001 and an additional \$1.4 million is earmarked for emergency preparedness in 2006, he said.

All public safety agencies countywide have entered into mutual-aid agreements as stipulated by federal regulations and increased use of information systems for early detection of transmitted diseases. They've also completed required homeland security training. The focus in the near future will be on improving those initiatives and all-hazard plans, as well as acquiring necessary equipment for first responders, he said.

Art Aisner can be reached at aaisner@annarbornews.com or (734) 994-6823.

State jobless rate sinks to 6.4%

But experts and workers remain cautious

October 20, 2005

BY JOHN GALLAGHER
FREE PRESS BUSINESS WRITER

Is it real or just a blip?

Michigan celebrated its lowest monthly unemployment rate in nearly three years Wednesday, giving hope that Michigan's 4-year run of slack labor demand might be ending.

But economists and some workers cautioned that the state's labor market still faces grave challenges, chief among them restructuring in the automotive industry.

Michigan's September unemployment rate declined to 6.4%, its lowest rate since November 2002. That was down from 7.1% in September of last year. The report marked the second month in a row showing a healthy decrease in the jobless rate, which has been at or near the bottom of the 50 states for the last year or so.

But not everyone believes the good news is real. Bill Przybycien, 46, an information technology worker from Warren who lost his job two years ago and hasn't found another, contends the decline is illusory.

"Just because the numbers say they went down, I have to believe there's a lot of people like me out there," he said.

Several economists agreed that caution was required in interpreting the unemployment numbers.

"It's hard to say if those reductions can be sustained," Bruce Weaver, an analyst with the state's Department of Labor and Economic Growth, said. But he added, "Any time the rate goes down and you have an increase in both of the employment measures, both total employment and payroll jobs, those are positive signals."

Charles Ballard, a professor of economics at Michigan State University, agreed.

"That is on the edge of being a trend," he said of the recent monthly declines. But he, too, urged watchful waiting.

"There are a lot of dangerous signs on the horizon," he said. "But I'm cautiously optimistic that we're headed modestly in the right direction. It's still got a long way to go."

Patrick Anderson, a Lansing-based economic consultant, said any gains in recent months could be overwhelmed by the coming restructuring of Delphi Corp. and other auto industry firms.

Those restructurings might cost Michigan several more factories and thousands more jobs.

"What we see here is a silver lining in a cloud," Anderson said of the September report. "I'd clearly like to be optimistic but I'm not."

Autoworkers coming back from short-term summer layoffs in September accounted for most of the gain in labor markets, the state reported. Government jobs, which include everything from public school teachers to the cop on the beat, were also up and in fact now outnumber factory jobs in the state. At the same time, retail trade jobs declined in September, possibly because higher gasoline prices left consumers with less money to spend in stores.

That prompted Anderson to say that Michigan "can't afford to be adding government jobs while the private-sector jobs are shrinking."

Professional and business services, often called the knowledge-based jobs of the future, were up slightly for the month but remain down overall for the year.

That might be one reason information technology workers like Przybycien are still looking for work. When he lost his last job as an IT analyst on contract to the Henry Ford Health System, his company offered him a position in Indianapolis. But Przybycien, the main caretaker for his 85-year-old mother, felt he couldn't leave the state because of his family obligations.

"I took my chances at staying here and trying to find something," he said. "The longer I'm out, you have that employment gap, and it's a negative. My next shot is trying to figure out how to go back to school and how to pay for it."

Contact JOHN GALLAGHER at 313-222-5173 or gallagher@freepress.com.

Michigan jobless rate hits 3-year low

Delphi bankruptcy and more cuts at GM keep economists from banking on turnaround.

By Gary Heinlein / The Detroit News
Thursday, October 20, 2005

LANSING -- Michigan's unemployment rate dropped last month to 6.4 percent -- its lowest level in nearly three years -- but economists said they need more evidence before they are persuaded that the troubled economy is on the mend.

"It's good news, but there are a lot of issues still on the horizon," said Gary Olson, director of the Senate Fiscal Agency.

The issues include this month's bankruptcy filing by Troy-based Delphi Corp., which could signal another round of manufacturing layoffs, the continuing departure of 2,700 jobs from Greenville's Electrolux plant and Northwest Airlines Corp.'s financial troubles.

General Motors Corp. also is looking to shed thousands of jobs as part of its effort to become leaner and more competitive with foreign automakers that have cut into its U.S. market share.

The state's September jobless rate fell three-tenths of a percentage point from August's 6.7 percent rate. It's the lowest unemployment rate since November 2002, when it was 6.3 percent, but was well above September's national unemployment rate of 5.1 percent.

State officials said most of the improvement resulted from the return to work of 8,000 autoworkers who had been on short-term layoff during July and August.

That was offset by the loss of 8,000 jobs in the trade-transportation-utilities segment -- mostly retail workers.

But the state gained 4,000 government jobs, 3,000 education and health services jobs and 2,000 professional and business services jobs last month.

The unemployment rate now has declined by six-tenths of a percentage point over two months, but state officials remain cautious about the economic outlook.

"We've managed to enjoy unemployment declines for two months but it's hard to predict if this can be sustained," said Bruce Weaver, an analyst with the state's Office of Labor Market Information in Detroit. "The jobless rate has been hovering around 7 percent in Michigan for two years."

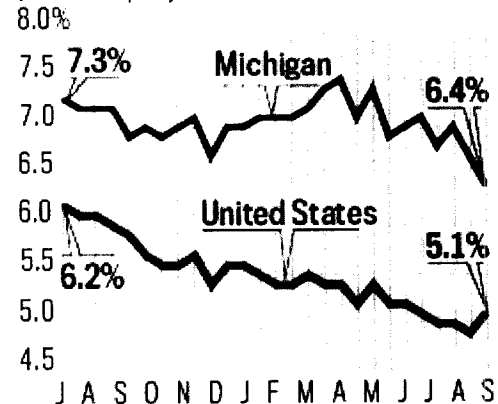
During that time, Michigan has had one of the highest unemployment rates in the nation.

Patrick Anderson, principal for the Anderson Economic Group in Lansing, said the latest figures are a mixture of good and bad news.

It's bothersome that the state still has 6,000 fewer professional-business services jobs now than a year ago, when that has been a hot growth segment for the national economy, Anderson said. Payroll employment in that sector, while up last month over August, still dropped from 589,000 jobs in September 2004 to 582,000 this year.

Unemployment rate

(Seasonally adjusted)



Sources: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Growth

The Detroit News

"It's always nice to see an increase in automotive industry employment ... but we'll be lucky to hold the level we have over the next year," Anderson added. "The trends, both inside the auto industry and outside it, unfortunately, are not positive right now."

Job growth at a "subpar rate" of about 1.1 to 1.2 percent through 2007 has been forecast by economists at the University of Michigan's Research Seminar in Quantitative Economics -- even though U.S. auto sales are expected to remain strong over the period. That amounts to about 47,200 new jobs next year and 52,500 in 2007.

In their most recent report, released Sept. 7, the U-M analysts said these will be the first years of job creation in Michigan since 2000, but it will be the weakest rate of job growth since 1992, when the economy was pulling out of a recession.

Despite the job growth last month, wages fell. Average weekly earnings for production workers in the auto industry were \$1,256.99, down \$18.27 from the same month last year because hours worked declined, the report said.

You can reach Gary Heinlein at (313) 222-2470 or gheinlein@detnews.com.

September Jobless Rate Lowest In Three Years

Despite this month's bad economic news from Delphi, Michigan's job market showed improvement in September as unemployment dropped by three-tenths of one percent to 6.4 percent, it's lowest point since November 2002.

Total employment in the state rose by 36,000 positions and unemployment fell by 17,000 as the state's labor force expanded over the month.

"The state's jobless rate fell by six-tenths of a percentage point in the last two months," said Rick **WACLAWEK**, director of the Bureau of Labor Market Information and Strategic Initiatives. "However, we will need several more months of data to determine if this is a short-term occurrence, or a longer-term trend, especially given some of the challenges taking place in the automotive sector."

The Department of Labor and Economic Growth jobless report featured the following highlights:

- Part of the September reduction in unemployment was the return to work of previously laid-off workers in the auto industry.
- From the second quarter to the third quarter of 2005, employment in Michigan edged upward by 5,000 and unemployment declined by 14,000, as the state's quarterly jobless rate decreased by three-tenths of one percentage point to 6.7 percent. This was the third consecutive quarterly rate decline for the state, and the lowest quarterly rate since the fourth quarter of 2002.
- Since September 2004, unemployment declined in Michigan by 33,000 or 9.1 percent, which outpaced the nationwide decrease of 4.3 percent for the same period.

The Detroit-Warren-Livonia Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in September dropped over the month by seven-tenths of one percentage point to 6.5 percent. That represents the lowest unemployment in the area since October 2002's 6.5 percent. Between August and September of this year, employment in the area rose by 17,000, meanwhile, unemployment declined by 15,000.

The report also found that in September, it was the beleaguered manufacturing sector that helped brighten the state's jobs picture. Manufacturing led the way by adding 8,000 payroll jobs during the month, followed by government which expanded employment by 4,000 payroll jobs.

Smaller increases were found in the education and health services, sectors, up 3,000 and professional and business services up 2,000. Somewhat offsetting these gains was an employment decline in trade, transportation and utilities (down 8,000).

October 19, 2005

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE DROPS TO THREE-YEAR LOW

The state's unemployment rate dropped to almost a three-year low in September, but at 6.4 percent still remained above the national average of 5.1 percent, according to a report from the Department of Labor and Economic Growth.

While officials trumpeted that unemployment fell for two months as well as being down from the prior year, they were also hesitant to call the economy improved.

"The state's jobless rate fell by six-tenths of a percentage point in the last two months," said Rick Waclawek, director of DLEG's Bureau of Labor Market Information and Strategic Initiatives. "However, we will need several more months of data to determine if this is a short-term occurrence, or a longer-term trend, especially given some of the challenges taking place in the automotive sector."

The unemployment drop reflected growth in both employment and the total workforce in September as well as a drop in the number of unemployed, the report said. The total labor force grew to 5.13 million from 5.11 million in August. And of that, 4.8 million were employed compared to 4.76 million in August. That cut the number unemployed to 328,000 from 345,000 and the unemployment rate from 6.7 percent.

In September 2004, the workforce was 5.09 million with 4.73 million employed for an unemployment rate of 7.1 percent.

But the report noted that part of the increase in employment was due to auto workers returning to the job. Announcements of bankruptcy filings and contract renegotiations raise some questions whether those job gains will be maintained.

In the meantime, the state added 8,000 payroll jobs in September, for a total of 4.36 million. Increases of 8,000 in manufacturing, 4,000 in government, 3,000 in education and health services and 2,000 in professional and business services were offset by the loss of 8,000 in trade, transportation and utilities and 1,000 in information.

And the state is still down 38,000 payroll jobs from September 2004, most of that, 23,000, in manufacturing.

The report showed earnings in manufacturing sectors are also still down for the year. Overall, manufacturing earnings, \$896 a week, increased just 9 cents per week from August and were still down \$19.53 from September 2004. Transportation equipment saw

better growth, with earnings higher (\$1,257), up more from August (\$9.87) and down less from a year ago (\$18.27).

The good employment news was echoed in Detroit, with the metropolitan area actually besting the state in unemployment cuts and annual job growth. The region still had higher unemployment, at 6.5 percent, than the state as a whole. But that was down from 7.2 percent in August and 7.4 percent in September 2004.

The region also saw its workforce grow, to 2.223 million from 2.221 million in August, and its employment grow, to 2.078 million from 2.061 million. The workforce in September 2004 was 2.211 million with 2.047 employed.

Fear arises that hurricanes could cut local giving

Thursday, October 20, 2005

MARY L. LAWRENCE
THE SAGINAW NEWS

Cherrie Benchley isn't surprised to see the outpouring of donations for victims of the Gulf Coast hurricanes.

It's the type of caring and sharing the interim president and chief executive officer of the United Way of Saginaw County encounters during the charity's annual fundraising drive.

The United Way and other charities that feed and clothe the needy year-round are fearful that donations for hurricane relief may trigger a drop in donations for local needs.

Even before the tragedy of hurricanes Katrina and Rita and the more recent announcement of Delphi Corp. filing for bankruptcy, United Way organizers anticipated a difficult campaign as a sluggish economy continues.

United Way officials are anticipating fallout from the reorganization of the auto parts supplier.

The situation at Delphi has the potential to take hundreds of thousands of dollars out of the annual campaign, United Way officials say. That's significant because Delphi employees donated more than \$1 million to the 2004 campaign, mostly through monthly payroll deductions.

Typically, numerous charities -- the United Way included -- start collecting donations in the fall and continue through the holidays. The charity's campaign began 10 days after Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast on Aug. 29.

This year's goal is to collect \$2.8 million to fund 23 health and human services agencies. After more than a month of fundraising, volunteers have collected \$224,000 -- 8 percent of the goal.

The drive continues through the end of November.

"I think we're about where we were at this time during last year's campaign," Benchley said.

Typically, the bulk of United Way pledges come at the midway point in the campaign as volunteers wrap up solicitations and special promotions at various businesses.

"I think people will come through this year. (The community is) like a family in an emergency; you take care of the emergency, but you don't stop feeding your family.

"I can't even imagine what it's like for people to deal with this (hurricane) disaster. The spirit of the (evacuees) is strong."

Benchley said another reason the campaign started slowly is that regular campaign supporters were involved in efforts supporting hurricane victims who have come to mid-Michigan.

She praised the many companies that loyally support the United Way each year and said that five new companies, most in the construction business, have pledged to support the charity.

Students collect 1,000 coats for distribution to needy

Thursday, October 20, 2005

MIKE ROCHA
THE SAGINAW NEWS

No child will go without a coat in Saginaw County if Hemlock students have anything to say about it.

This week Hemlock High School and Middle School students will end a "Coats For Kids" drive that so far has netted more than 1,000 coats.

This is welcome news to Salvation Army officials.

"We do expect additional need because of the economy and the financial distress in the area," said Ann Bierman, director of marketing and development for the Salvation Army in Saginaw.

"The students are doing a fantastic job. It's phenomenal."

Hemlock High's National Honor Society is sponsoring the drive that topped their 2003 effort of 600 coats.

"We didn't even imagine we would match the 600," said Louise Fleischmann, National Honor Society adviser and the High School librarian. "A thousand coats, this is really amazing. We are keeping them in the libraries at the High School and Middle School.

"I can barely get to my filing cabinets."

And school leaders still haven't counted all the hats and mittens collected.

The students set up drop boxes not only at district schools, but at grocery stores and the local library. "We really tried to make it a community effort," Fleischmann said.

The High School class that brought in the most coats will receive a breakfast at 8 a.m. Friday. Businesses such as Meijer Inc., Ric's Food Center and McDonald's restaurant donated food for the breakfast.

The winning Middle School class will have their breakfast next week, Fleischmann said.

The Salvation Army annually distributes between 1,000 and 1,300 coats to needy families.

Local radio station WIOG-FM, 102.5 is assisting with the annual coat drive in Saginaw, Bay, Midland and Genesee counties. It is sponsoring dropoff sites at its WIOG studios, 1740 Champagne, and at Fashion Square Mall, Midland Mall, Bay City Mall, Prime Outlets at Birch Run and the Salvation Army at 2030 N. Carolina.

The campaign -- which also includes donations of gloves, hats and mittens -- concludes Friday, Nov. 11.

Some of the coats also will go toward evacuees from Hurricane Katrina, Bierman said.

Staff Writer Brenda Wiegand contributed to this report.

Sanilac salutes unsung heroes - its volunteers

By ANGELA MULLINS
Times Herald

SANDUSKY- Diane Shephard was as surprised as anyone when her group's name was called during the Silver Lining Awards luncheon.

The 13 volunteers of the Sanilac County 4-H Council aren't used to being in the spotlight. Though they spend countless hours keeping programs going, it's often the 4-H youth who get the most attention.

"We're in the background most of the time," said Shephard, council secretary.

That changed Wednesday when the council received the group Silver Lining Crystal Award.

The award is the top recognition that can be received during the annual luncheon, which recognizes Sanilac County volunteers for their service.

Sixty-one people received Silver Lining Awards for giving time to everything from schools to domestic-violence shelters.

In their 13th year, the awards are sponsored by the Sanilac County Community Foundation, the United Way of Sanilac County and the Sanilac County Human Services Coordinating Body.

The goal of the awards is to give something back to the many people who dedicate their time to making the county a better place to live, said Helene Bridge, chairwoman of the awards committee.

"It's totally recognition and appreciation," Bridge said. "These people contribute so much to our community and how we live."

Judy Hudson, 58, of Lamotte Township said the awards also help encourage new volunteers to step forward.

Hudson received the individual Silver Lining Crystal Award for her many years of service in a variety of capacities.

Among other things, she volunteers with her church and in the school community.

"There are people out there who need things, and we are all responsible," Hudson said. "Even if it's small things like buying an extra phone card and donating it when you buy one for yourself, it helps."

Contact Angela Mullins at (810) 989-6270 or amullins@gannett.com.

Originally published October 20, 2005

Volunteer witnesses Katrina's devastation

Social worker helped with mental health needs

HURRICANE NOTEBOOK

Thursday, October 20, 2005

BY JOHN MULCAHY

Ann Arbor News Staff Reporter

Ann Arbor social worker Christina Montague witnessed incredible devastation during her two-week stint as a volunteer Hurricane Katrina relief worker for the American Red Cross. Near the end of that time, she took people to see their former homes in New Orleans.

Montague, former chairwoman of the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners, went to Baton Rouge on Sept. 25 and returned to Ann Arbor on Oct. 9. During most of her time there, Montague helped as a mental health worker in a basketball arena converted to a shelter at Southern University and A&M College in Baton Rouge.

The people she took to see their flooded-out homes received contamination suits to wear during their visits, she said. In many cases, there was nothing left for them to salvage.

"One person could save some pictures, that was about it," she said.

Once the victims had visited their former homes and seen the near-total destruction, they were able to convey the severity of the problem to others still at the shelter, she said.

"What I wanted them to do was to be able to go back and tell the story, 'I was there and this is what I saw,'" Montague said.

The credibility of other victims telling about the destruction helped people still in the shelter come to terms with the situation and sometimes to realize that they might not be going back to their homes, Montague said.

Montague also helped victims with financial and practical needs, including arranging for housing or contacting relatives. She also just listened to their stories when they needed to talk.

"It was one of the most rewarding experiences I have had in my lifetime," Montague said.

John Mulcahy can be reached at jmulcahy@annarbornews.com or (734) 994-6858.

'Living wage' plan moves ahead in B.C.

Chris Springsteen
The Enquirer

Making \$10.19 an hour would mean a pretty significant raise for Don Wilson, a shift leader at the Haven of Rest's men's shelter.

However, paying Wilson and the 29 other Haven employees at least \$10.19 would be a pretty significant hardship for the shelter, said Elaine Hunsicker, the shelter's executive director.

In a nutshell, that's the two sides to a "living wage" debate that began earlier this week in Battle Creek. That debate might escalate, as the Battle Creek City Commission voted 6-3 Tuesday to introduce an ordinance that would set \$10.19 as the minimum wage for certain companies working with the city.

For example, any company or organization that receives, in any 12-month period, more than \$50,000 in contracts or \$10,000 in grants, including tax abatements and federal Community Development Block Grant funds, would be required to pay employees at least \$10.19 an hour.

"It would be nice to have extra money," said Wilson. "I live on a budget, just like most everyone who works here. When you've got more money, you spend more money.

"I'd like to make \$10 an hour, but I don't want that to take away from anything we can do (at the Haven)."

If the city approves the ordinance — which could happen as soon as Nov. 1 — Wilson could make \$10.19 an hour unless the Haven, which receives CDBG funds annually, gets an exemption by proving that paying the living wage "would cause harm" to the nonprofit, according to the ordinance.

"We don't come anywhere near \$10 on average," Hunsicker said. "To do that would create a tremendous hardship when we're paying \$8 or \$9 an hour for most jobs.

"I mean, we would love to pay our people more, but because we're so dependent on private donations, it's just not something we can do."

Nonprofits with fewer than 10 employees and for-profit companies with fewer than five employees would be exempt from the ordinance. Also, any company covered by the city's current prevailing-wage ordinance would be exempt.

Prevailing wage requires contractors doing construction projects funded with public money to pay a wage equal to levels common to where the project is being completed.

Living wage laws, however, generally are based on economic indicators, including the poverty line, and are broader than prevailing wage.

About a dozen city, county or township governments in Michigan have living wage laws, including Ann Arbor, Detroit, Ypsilanti and Lansing.

Commissioner Ryan Hersha pushed for the ordinance because he said he wants to make sure companies getting financial assistance from the city pay workers enough to keep them off of food stamps.

While the business community generally cries foul when a living wage is instituted, it's difficult to say if living wage hurts business, but it seems to reduce poverty, said Tim Bartik, senior economist for Kalamazoo's W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research.

"I don't know of any studies showing it has a measurable effect on economic development," Bartik said. "But that doesn't mean there isn't evidence.

"I think in terms of empirical evidence, there are some signs that living wage seems to have some positive effect on poverty; actually, surprisingly high effects. You actually find the effect on poverty exceeds the direct effect on the people getting the higher wage."

In effect, Bartik said, it appears having a living wage moves more people out of poverty than just the people who are getting the living wage, possibly because other employers feel compelled to pay the higher living wage.

Several companies that recently received tax abatements or contracts from the city declined to comment because they were not familiar with the ordinance.

It appears many of them likely pay more than the proposed living wage for most jobs already — about \$15 to \$17 an hour on average for companies in the Fort Custer Industrial Park, said Jim Hettinger, president and chief executive officer for Battle Creek Unlimited.

However, temporary employment placement agencies that usually place entry-level workers into the manufacturing jobs only pay about \$8 an hour, according to Mark Lancaster, president of Employment Group.

So are the employees placed in an II Stanley or TRMI position employees of the company or the "temp" agency?

It's an important distinction, because while these companies have gotten tax abatements from the city, the "temp" agencies have not.

The ordinance could be tweaked to answer that question, said Battle Creek City Attorney Clyde Robinson.

Lancaster said there is no question.

"They are definitely employees of the staffing firm," he said. "They are not employees of the company they are placed in."

Chris Springsteen covers Battle Creek City Hall and Emmett Township. He can be reached at 966-0676 or at csprings@battlecr.gannett.com. Read his blog in the News Extras area at battlecreekenquirer.com.

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Proposal would help poor get pets fixed

Thursday, October 20, 2005

By Greg Chandler
CHRONICLE NEWS SERVICE

The Harbors Humane Society and some Ottawa County officials are proposing an initiative they hope will cut down on the number of stray dogs and cats that are brought to the humane society and cut down on the county's animal control costs.

The Help Everyone Reduce Overpopulation Project, or HERO Project, would encourage low-income residents to have their pets spayed or neutered.

The project would be paid for, in part, by pet owners in the county who wish to donate funds beyond their pet license renewal fees.

"We're going to provide a check-off on dog license renewals for people to make a contribution," said Kathy Machuta, executive director of the humane society.

The proposal will be considered by the Ottawa County Board of Commissioners next week, after the board's Finance and Administration Committee on Tuesday recommended its adoption. If approved, the project would begin in December, when the county begins its dog license renewal period, County Treasurer Mary Richardson said.

"Ottawa County is responsible for animal control, and the cost of animal control is a significant part of the county budget," Richardson said.

For example, the county has more than \$382,000 set aside in this year's general fund budget for animal control, of which it had spent about 62 percent through September. It costs the county about \$91 for each stray dog and cat its animal control officers bring into the humane society, Richardson said.

Residents who meet federal poverty qualifications could apply for the program through the humane society.

The HERO Project has received a \$10,000 contribution from a private donor that will be used to match the contributions from the license renewal check-off, Machuta said.

County health officials support the project, saying the check-off idea offers a convenient and voluntary method for residents to support efforts to control the pet population in the county.

Katrina's Cost to the Poor

The Washington Post

Thursday, October 20, 2005; Page A26

CONGRESS VOTED earlier this year to trim \$35 billion in entitlement spending over the next five years. House Republican leaders want to bump up that number to \$50 billion -- supposedly to deal with the costs of Hurricane Katrina. But don't be bamboozled by the self-satisfied claims of fiscal discipline you'll hear from those pressing these cuts: Their post-Katrina budget plan would add to the deficit, not reduce it.

That's because the required spending cuts don't come close to paying for the at least \$70 billion in new tax cuts provided for in the budget -- cuts that mostly benefit the wealthiest Americans and that apparently remain sacrosanct, no matter what expenses pile up. Meantime, the spending cuts, if approved, would probably come primarily from programs for the poor -- such as Medicaid, food stamps, child-care support, the earned-income tax credit and Supplemental Security Income.

So a hurricane that exposed the disturbing problems of poverty in America could end up providing the justification to make even deeper cuts in the programs that provide an essential safety net for the poor. It's a welcome sign that the leadership, facing resistance from some in their ranks, yesterday called off a planned vote to require the extra cuts, but that's not the end of the story: Committee chairmen will still be pressed to make the trims.

Getting control over growth in the mandatory spending programs that make up an increasing share of the federal budget isn't just a good idea; it is, in the end, a necessity. But it has to be done in a balanced way that puts the totality of the federal budget on the table -- not just programs that lack high-priced lobbyists or entrenched constituencies. If entitlement spending is on the table, why only programs for the poor and not more broad-based entitlement programs such as Medicare and Social Security? Even better, why not start with the subsidies for wealthy farmers instead of food stamp spending that provides recipients with less than \$1 per meal? The House Republican plan calls for shared sacrifice -- but most of the sacrificing will be done by the poor.

Granholm urges faith-based initiatives here to keep faith

Wednesday, October 19, 2005

By Ed Finnerty

efinnerty@kalamazoogazette.com 388-8551

Gov. Jennifer Granholm was in Kalamazoo this morning to talk with Northside church leaders about community and faith-based initiatives.

Granholm in March created a state office to partner with faith-based organizations in providing social services, such as helping senior citizens, training the unemployed and mentoring children.

"This community, Kalamazoo, is absolutely at the forefront of this initiative," Granholm told the Kalamazoo Gazette after a 50-minute, closed-door meeting with about 30 members of the Northside Ministerial Alliance.

"My message to them is that we want to be a partner with the faith community ... in transforming lives," the governor said in a brief interview after the breakfast meeting, held at Galilee Baptist Church.

In 2002, Kalamazoo was the only community in Michigan to receive a \$1 million grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for faith-based initiatives. The Northside Ministerial Alliance used the money to establish a training institute to help smaller faith- and community-based groups obtain nonprofit status for fund-raising, grant writing and computer technology.

The federal funding ran out in September, and the alliance is now seeking financial support from foundations and other community sources to keep the effort going, said the Rev. J. Louis Felton, pastor of Galilee Baptist Church.

Asked whether the state can help, Granholm said, "We don't have any money to fund anything, but we do have partners."

The state Office of Community and Faith-Based Initiatives will help communities identify sources of state and federal grants and provide a contact point for information on successful initiatives, the governor said.

Granholm also was to appear this morning at a ribbon-cutting ceremony for a new Kalamazoo County Democratic Party headquarters on South Westnedge Avenue, Kalamazoo Mayor Robert Jones said.